

Sunday, February 15, 1970

Mr. Ralph Link, Lay Minister

Order of Worship

Prelude

Lighting the Candles of Worship

*Hymn No. 29

*Invocation and Choral Introit

*Prayer of Confession - Our Heavenly Father, who by Your love made me, and through Your love have kept me, and in Your love would make me perfect, I humbly confess that I have not loved You with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, and that I have not loved my neighbor as Christ loved me. Your life is within my soul but my selfishness has hindered You. I have not lived by faith. I have resisted your spirit. I have neglected Your inspirations. Forgive what I have been; help me to amend what I am; and in Your Spirit direct what I should be; that You may come into the full glory of Your creation, in me and in all men, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Kyrie

*The Assurance of Pardon

*The Gloria Patri

Responsive Reading Sel. 19, Page 571

Hymn No. 287

The Scripture - Psalm 27

Pastoral Prayer and Choral Response

Offertory

*Doxology and Dedication of Tithes and Offerings

The Anthem "The Wondrous Cross"

The Sermon "Christian Courage"

*Hymn No. 158

*Benediction and Choral Response

*Indicates that we stand.

Greeters

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Brinker

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday evening at 6:30 - Junior Choir Rehearsal

Wednesday evening at 7:15 - Senior Choir Rehearsal

Friday evening at 7:30 - Workers' Conference

Mr. and Mrs. E. ... Beck are slowly recovering from the flu and wish to thank everyone for cards, flowers and kind thoughts extended on their behalf during their illness.

The following invitation was received by Mr. Beck:

"Dear Brethren in Christ, First United Church of Christ, Apollo, Pa. We, the people and pastor of the First United Church of Christ of Vandergrift, Pa., do hereby extend to all of you a most sincere and cordial welcome to worship with us during Lent. If there is no conflict of dates or times in our services with those of your own church, then we want you to know that we would like very much to have you come and worship with us in our church. You will find a very warm and hearty welcome into our fellowship if you come to visit with us. Come and See!

Rev. G. R. Winters

There will be services each Wednesday at 7:30 and on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of Holy Week. The preaching theme will be on the Life of Christ as portrayed in the Great Masterpieces of Art.

Record of Giving for Feb. 1, 1970

Needed to meet current budget	\$260.69
Given to local church, current fund	284.45
Needed to meet Synodical Budget	68.15
Given to Synodical Budget	42.55
Parsonage Fund	10.00

Organist

Winifred Laufer

Christian Courage

PSALM

Text: Psalm 27; 1

The word courage is defined in Webster's dictionary as, "The quality of mind that enables one to encounter difficulties and danger with firmness or without fear." When we think of this word we usually think of soldiers in battle and the heroic feats that are performed by some of them. But the courage an individual may have in every day life is often overlooked. Jesus had this kind of courage. He had to have it in order to endure the agonizing ordeal that he went through in what we call "Holy Week." Perhaps we have never thought of it in this light. But how else can we explain the calm and matter of fact way in which He faced His fate? There were probably serious doubts and misgivings in His heart and mind. He probably wanted to evade the issue. He even prayed that God would show Him another way. But when He had determined that this was God's will that He should suffer, He resolutely accepted this and with all of the courage at His command set His face toward Jerusalem and did what had to be done.

But here we stop and say, "But He was the Son of God and what does this have to do with us?" We may never have to face this type of situation but the point is that there have been men down through history who have had to muster this type of courage because of their love for Jesus Christ. The fact also remains that through the examples of common men set before us, we should be able to muster the strength and courage needed to live our individual lives. Let us look at a few examples.

John Huss was an earlier reformer of the Roman Catholic Church. He got himself into hot water for his outspoken views against some of the practices of the Church. For this he was summoned to appear before the Council of Constance for questioning. He was promised safe conduct to and from the council. He was safely conducted to the council and while there he was found guilty of speaking against the Church and was condemned to death. He was burned at the stake. A man who has never been thought of as having risked his life in his quest to reform the Church was Martin Luther. We are all familiar with his now famous answer when asked to recant and he replied, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen." But not too many are familiar with some of the backstage maneuvers that took place here. Luther was well aware of the fate that had befallen John Huss. So when he was summoned to appear before the Council of Worms and promised safe conduct to and from it, we can be reasonably sure that he had mixed emotions about attending.

But secretly unknown even to him some of his friends went to the Council prepared to meet this eventuality. And at the point in the council meeting where it was feared he was to be seized they virtually took him prisoner and spirited him away. He was held a prisoner by these friends until it was safe for him to return without fear of being killed. This is but one example of a man in the 16th century who had the Christian courage to fight for his Lord.

But we can find other examples closer to our own times. One such case is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. For those of you who do not recognise the name, he was an eminent Theologian. He was on a par with Karl Barth and Paul Tillich. In fact this man possessed a unique type of intellect. He was brilliant and yet he was able to reach most people with his ideas. He was born in what is now East Germany. His troubles began in 1933 when he delivered a lecture broadcast against Adolph Hitler. The broadcast was cut off before he was finished. Shortly after this he accepted a call to be the pastor of two German speaking congregations in London England. He did this because he wanted no parts of Hitler's Germany. But his love for his homeland was too strong to keep him away. He became active in the resistance movement, firmly believing that in a situation such as his country was involved in, that God did not want His people and ministers to stand back and do nothing. As a result of this he was arrested in April 1943. His guards were secretly friendly to him and took him to the cells of despairing prisoners to minister to them. They also saved his letters, essays and poems. His last weeks in prison were spent with prisoners of all nationalities. An English officer wrote of him the following, "Bonhoeffer always seemed to me to spread an atmosphere of happiness and joy over the least incident and profound gratitude for the mere fact he was alive. He was one of the few persons I ever met for whom God was real and always near. On Sunday April 8, 1945, Pastor Bonhoeffer conducted a little service of worship and spoke to us in a way that went to the heart of all of us. He found the right words to express the spirit of our imprisonment, the thoughts and the resolutions it had brought us. He had hardly ended his last prayer when the door opened and two civilians entered. They said, "Prisoner Bonhoeffer, come with us." That had only one meaning for all prisoners, the gallows. We said goodbye to him. He took me aside and said, "This is the end, but for me it is the beginning of life." The next day he was hanged in Flossenbürg." Unquote. The text upon which he spoke that last day was, "With His stripes we are healed."

Another man wrote of him, "For him Christianity could never be intellectual theory, doctrine divorced from life, or mystical emotion, but always it must be responsible obedient action, the discipleship of Christ in every situation of concrete everyday life, personal and public." Unquote. This is the type of man Dietrich Bonhoeffer was. Six years before his imprisonment by the Gestapo he had written, "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die."

But all of this is past history you say and we do not have anything like this going on today. Or do we? Are there men today who would risk their all for Jesus Christ. Of course there are and thank God that we still have people who will stand up for what they believe. We could mention several but as one instance let us think of the Rev. Father Kavanaugh of the Roman Catholic Church. Here is a man who is no longer a priest because he took a stand against what he thought to be the injustice of the Church. Whether we realize it or not the Roman Catholic Church is going through another reformation and if the present trend continues it will probably make the other reformation look like very small and insignificant event. The clergy in many areas is leading the protests.

Men like Father Kavanaugh have fought to be heard. Because of his actions he was relieved of his duties. He has since married and his marriage was performed by his brother also a priest. All of these actions have not endeared him to the hierarchy of the Church. But he still maintains he is a Catholic and they cannot take this away from him. Perhaps we cannot compare him to Martin Luther in the respect that his life may not be in danger but he is showing courage to take a stand against injustice. He is taking a stand against what he believes to be wrong. This requires a good deal of courage in a society such as ours, especially if we think of all the incidents we have read and heard of people refusing to take a stand on anything or refusing to assist someone in need. Our modern day is not conducive to making people want to be identified with anything. We are rapidly approaching the day when we will merely be a faceless number. I dread to think of myself as merely 146-24-7683 instead of my name. It just doesn't seem to be me. But as long as we have people who are willing to be silent and to stand by when the time for action arrives, then we will continue down this road. But there is still room in our society for people with Christian courage to take a stand.

We can be witnesses in our own back yards. We need not travel to distant lands or states. Right here is where some of this courage needs to be shown. Just the living of the Christian life requires a lot more courage than

most of us think it does. When we tack the name Christian behind our name we let ourselves wide open for the taunts and smears of the world. This requires courage. It takes courage to remain a Christian when we see those who are not flourish and do well in their lives and businesses. Sometimes it makes us wonder as Job did, if it is worth it. But when we compare our easy, soft leisurely lived lives, there is no comparison between us and those who have been martyred for their belief. The one main example we must always come back to for comparison is still Jesus Christ. He faced the future of a trial and execution, knowing full well that this was to be His fate. The fact that must have made it that much harder to bear was the fact that He did not deserve such a fate. He was not a criminal, nor had He committed anything that was deserving of death. But you see this is the way of the world. Commit a crime and you will be punished for it, but dare to speak out against the wrongs of society and you will be condemned for it. We can all think of illustrations to prove this and some of them have been quite recent. Just think of some of the prominent men of our country and how they have been treated because they dared to speak the truth. Now this may sound like I am saying to be a good Christian we must more or less be trouble makers and go around finding fault and exposing people for what they are. But this is only partially true. We must not compromise ourselves by becoming like the world wants us to be. We must try to help those who need help. This may take the form of helping someone who is in trouble with the law, or someone who may have done something wrong in the past and because of it is shunned by people and looked down upon. This is showing the courage of a Christian. We are not out to make names for ourselves as mud rakers or mud slingers, but we are in this world to assist and help anyone and everyone we can. Jesus gave us the guidelines when He said about visiting the prisons, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry and giving water to the thirsty, and then He said, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." This is the challenge for courage. But it requires courage to set ourselves apart from many others around us who are not of our beliefs and persuasion. We need to pray for the courage to and live the Christian life our prayer may well be, God of grace and God of glory, on thy people pour thy power; Crown thine ancient Church's story; bring her bud to glorious flower. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour. Set our feet on lofty places; gird our lives that they may be armored with all

Christlike graces in the fight to set men free. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, that we fail not man nor thee."

This is one of our familiar hymns. Yet too often as with mostly all hymns we sing them and they are merely only words. But words can move us, they can inspire up and they can motivate us if we let them. God grant that words such as these may make us willing and able to accept the Christian courage we have through Christ and to act upon it for the betterment of mankind and the furthering of God's Kingdom. Let us pray.